



LOWELL SCHOOL COMMITTEE
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Equity & Access
Subcommittee Meeting

Wednesday, January 13, 2021
City Hall – Council Chamber
6:00 p.m.

Subcommittee Members Present:	Chairperson Jackie Doherty, Hilary Clark and Robert Hoey
School Committee Members Present:	Mayor Leahy, Andy Descoteaux, Mike Dillon and Connie Martin
School Department Personnel Present:	Ms. Phillips, Chief Equity & Engagement Officer Dr. Duda, Coordinator, Family Resource Center

Chairperson Doherty called the meeting to order at 6:09 p.m. The following agenda item was discussed:

1. School Assignment Policy & Kindergarten Data

Chairperson Doherty opened the meeting and asked Ms. Phillips to address the Subcommittee. Ms. Phillips stated that the district's fundamental commitments to equity are as follows:

- Eliminate the racial, ethnic and linguistic achievement and opportunity gaps among all students.
- Provide equitable funding and resources among the district's diverse schools.
- Engage all families with courtesy, dignity, respect and cultural understanding.

Ms. Phillips stated that the desired outcomes is for all students to attend schools that are reflective of Lowell's rich diversity, for students and families to have satisfaction in their school assignment that meets the needs as learners and community members and that all students have access to the wide range of quality services and programs across schools.

She stated that currently we have fifteen (15) elementary programs that are organized into two (2) zones with city-wide options which are Zone one (1) and Zone (2) with a feeder pattern. Currently, students are assigned to a school in Kindergarten through Grade 8 based on space availability, sibling preference, ethnicity balance and place of residence. The district also has a lottery in place if there are more pre-registration requests than seats available. She stated that any registration applications received after the pre-registration period will be placed on a waitlist on a first-come first-served basis where open seats are not available within a requested grade and school.

Ms. Phillips shared racial/ethnic demographic data for the current kindergarten class and provided the following additional details:

- 36 Students born in Brazil
- 66 Students with Portuguese as their main language
- 1 Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander student
- 0 American Indian or Alaska Native
- 17% of students have indicated belonging to more than one (1) ethnic group

She shared the following findings of School Assignment based on the Temporary Policy:

1. As pertains to the Voluntary Desegregation Plan, Zone 1 and Zone 2 fall within the racial balance as of 62% - 82% minority student enrollment (targeted 72% with +/- 10% above or below the 72%).
2. As related to individual school racial balance (not a requirement of the Desegregation plan), two (2) school's individual racial balance are outside the parameters set in the Voluntary Desegregation Plan.
3. As relates to students identified for McKinney Vento services, some schools may have higher percentages of McKinney Vento students due to the following factors:
 - a. Location of shelters
 - b. Socio economics of the neighborhood
 - c. Doubled-up families
4. As relates to English learners, all schools offered ESL, services to students in their placement school. Further data analysis is currently being conducted regarding the level of service provided.

Ms. Phillips stated that the school assignment comparisons based on current kindergarten school assignments and prior year assignments are as follows:

1. The student racial balance remains relatively constant across school buildings and school years.
2. McKinney Vento student placements in 2019-20 reflect larger populations in different schools when comparing 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 school assignment data.
3. Economic data is currently being assessed.

She stated that given the large percentage of students of color in the district, most schools will remain racially diverse (as defined by the voluntary desegregation plan) regardless of placement by choice or placement driven by proximity to a student's home. She stated that facility capacity (under and over enrollment) is a challenge in some neighborhoods and schools, thus

single assignment based on proximity would exacerbate this problem, whereas clusters of schools and more compact zones could alleviate over and under enrollment in schools with capacity challenges. She stated that the two (2) mile walk zone may be "walk-able" by the state's definition; however, it impacts a family's ability to accept in person learning assignments in the absence of transportation. She stated that ongoing work is still needed in disaggregating economic data and identifying Brazilian students which is the district's largest growing population.

Subcommittee members and School Committee members present all agreed that this is a complicated matter. They asked for more information as it relates to economic data and other grades in the district. They questioned transportation costs and shared concerns about the two (2) mile walk zone. They also requested that the Transportation Director, Mr. Descoteaux be present at a meeting as this conversation continues.

Mr. Hoey made a motion for the Subcommittee to receive more data, transportation information as well as have the Transportation Director be present at the next meeting; seconded by Ms. Clark. 3 yeas APPROVED

Ms. Clark made a motion to adjourn at 7:06 p.m.; seconded by Mr. Hoey. 3 yeas APPROVED

Respectfully submitted,



Latifah Phillips, Chief Equity &
Engagement Officer for Dr. Joel Boyd,
Superintendent and Secretary, Lowell
School Committee

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